

Letter from Eliza Symonds Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, August 23, 1875, with transcript

Copy of letter from Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell to her son, Alexander Graham Bell August 23rd 75 P. O. Box 518 Brantford, Ont., Can August 23rd, 75 (No envelope) My dear Aleck,

Your letters of August 18th, and 20th, were received this Afternoon. The latter I did not see till a good while after I had read the other. But for the difference of dates, I should have feared the terrible disaster mentioned, had unsettled your brain. We earnestly trust all danger is over from the effects of the accident and your mind now at rest. Poor fellow, how can you for a moment doubt our sympathy? Have we not ever since we heard of your attachment acted exactly as you so earnestly desired we should? And did I not promise for your Father as well as myself that we would keep your secret inviolable? You must surely forget that up to this time we are entirely ignorant of your being an accepted lover of the young lady, or not. We understood you were prohibited from speaking to her on the subject for twelve months, consequently we could say but little till we knew her reply. We were as I told you before very much startled by your communication, not at the matter, but at the manner of making it. Your being now a full man, your own master, and the best judge of what is fitted for your happiness, we should never have thought of biasing you. We had no wish in the matter adverse to your own, for your happiness would make ours. We could not say much, knowing nothing of the young lady. I suppose I must have heard her name amongst those of your other pupils, but if so, I had quite forgotten it, and up to the time of your making your communications as to the feeling you had towards her, I was ignorant of her existence. You had no reason whatever for assuming that Mabel's deafness would be any objection to us, it would be ridiculous for us to object to your following your Father's example. In our utter ignorance of persons and circumstances, we simply waited to know more before we wrote more. 2 There was nothing to write about till the question had been asked and answered, or we knew how you had decided

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to act. I have just read your letter over again. What can you mean with regard to your conversation with Mrs. Hubbard? Has any letter miscarried? We have had but one from you on the subject. As you seem to have conveyed a false impression to her, I think you should either show or read this letter to her. I hope you may never read words from a child of your own that will send such a cold, deadly shiver through your veins as yours did through mine. We are the victims of your own excited imagination. I read your letter today at Uncle David's, and what they must have thought of me I know not. I could not speak to any of them for fear of breaking down. Is it really possible that your long silence and absence has arisen from the cause you name? Though you have not written to us, we never thought anything but hard work prevented you, and as in your letter to Uncle you spoke of your heart being at home, and of the probability of popping in some day unawares, we believed it. I fancied two or three times that I saw your face at the parlour window after dusk and was disappointed, yet have tried to be patient never supposing that causeless anger or want of affection had kept you away. I certainly noticed the absence of any allusion to us in Mary's letter, but even then I supposed you considered it a mere business letter. I do not know what she replied about your request, but she seemed to think herself unfitted for the undertaking. You also attribute an erroneous motive to my scanty letters. You perhaps forget that from March till the middle of July, I was entirely without a servant, except for one fortnight. And as we were seldom alone on Sundays (my writing day) I found it impossible to keep up my usual habit. By the time I was relieved by Pollie's return, I was pretty well run down, and absolutely needed the few days rest and change Papa was anxious to give me. It was at my request he scribbled off that postal card at Southampton, merely 3 to let you see you were not forgotten. What else could he have said than he did? In his ignorance of your proceedings and the long time that he supposed must elapse before you would know the lady's mind, there was nothing we could do but to wait and see. We never supposed you were waiting for our permission to speak to her after you had obtained that of her own parents. I certainly cautioned you to be certain that you didn't mistake a fancy for an attachment, as many young men do, but be guided by reason as well as affection in your choice. There was surely nothing wrong

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in that? Neither your Father nor I can have a shadow of objection, provided your love is mutual and the young lady calculated to make you a good and suitable wife. We should receive such with open arms, but we should be perhaps less delighted if you received such an answer from her as you received from another person. We therefore waited your return home to know more about it. There is no reason why you and a wife who is deaf should not be as happy as Papa and I have always been. My remark about a deaf-mute was rather an enquiry than anything else, having as I told you before, forgotten that a daughter of Mr. Hubbard was amongst your pupils. There are not so many of us left that we can afford to take up unreasonable offense against each other, or imagine affronts where none were thought of or intended. We should the rather cling the more closely together for mutual strength and support. Some of us may not need it long, and as I have told you before, it will be a comfort to me to see you well settled in life with one who cares for you as much as your Mother does, before she is called home. I have not been very well lately, and this misunderstanding is not calculated to cheer or strengthen me. Perhaps it is a judgment upon me for dwelling so much as I have done upon the loss of your brothers. It seems as if we were quite desolate now. You will surely write and let us know how your dear invalid is progressing, we hope your fears deceived you, 3 and that her life being saved from drowning, she will surely recover. Your own feelings cannot exceed ours in sorrow. I would like to have Mrs. Hubbard's address. I have felt so bewildered while writing this letter that perhaps I have made many repetitions, please excuse them, and if there is anything of sufficient consequence to communicate, telegraph. All letters that have anything of consequence in them are kept to ourselves and put away out of sight, by us. In great grief we are,

Your affectionate parents, E.G.B.